

Virg

State Senator Bernero

Serving the 23rd District Constituents in Lansing

News & Information for Michigan Seniors

Dear Lansing Seniors:

As the fall legislative session approaches, I want to let you know about some key issues here at the State Capitol that should interest you as a senior citizen. The high cost of prescription drugs continues to be a major concern for seniors. In this newsletter you can read about my efforts to make prescriptions more affordable at your neighborhood pharmacy. You will also find information about my 4th Annual Senior Activity Fair and my recently formed Elder Abuse Task Force. The task force will examine ways that we can protect seniors from scams and frauds and abusive caregivers or guardians. Please feel free to share your views and experiences with me by filling out the enclosed coupon and returning it to my office. You can also get copies of several helpful publications with the same coupon. As always, if you would like to share your opinion with me, or if I can be helpful to you in any way, please feel free to call.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Virg Bernero'.

*Virg Bernero
State Senator • 23rd District*

How to Contact Me

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Fall 2004

Help With Prescription Costs

The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) has developed a website to help you find prescription assistance for which you might qualify. Just go to **www.helpingpatients.org**, answer a few brief questions, and type in the brand name of the medicine you are searching for. The website will then provide you with a list of appropriate resources and assistance programs for which you might be eligible along with contact information. If you do not have Internet access, please call my office at 373-1734 to obtain this info in brochure form.

Medicare Prescription Drug Benefits

Many seniors have asked me about the new federal Medicare drug benefit plan which was passed by the U.S. Congress last year.

For more detailed information about the Medicare Drug Improvement and Modernization Act, you can call the Medicare Hotline at **1-800-MEDICARE** or log on to **www.medicare.gov/MedicareReform/**.



You can also contact AARP at **1-800-869-3150** or access **www.aarp.org** and select the Health and Wellness section.

Did You Know...

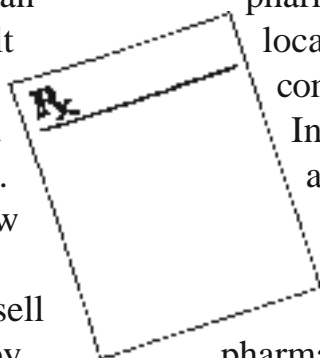
...that in 60 years Social Security has never missed a payment?

...that Social Security is expected to meet its obligation for the next 39 years?

...that Social Security is expected to meet its obligation for the next 75 years with only modest infusions of money.

Mail Order Pharmacies Update

Neighborhood pharmacies here in Lansing and across Michigan have had an increasingly difficult time competing with mail-order and Internet pharmacies. Our current state law says that local pharmacies cannot sell prescription drugs by mail order, nor are they



allowed to fill three-month supplies like the mail order pharmacies can. This puts local pharmacies at a competitive disadvantage. In an effort to maintain a level playing field and hopefully allow you to get better prices at your local pharmacies, I have sponsored legislation to allow local

pharmacies to sell prescriptions by mail order and to offer seniors three months of maintenance prescriptions for the same price as mail order. Many constituents prefer neighborhood pharmacies for their ability to keep medication records to monitor possible drug interactions.

Elder Abuse Task force Established

In 1991, Citizens for Better Care, a community-based statewide coalition, established the Elder Abuse Prevention Education Program to provide information and advocacy for long-term care consumers. In addition to public awareness and advocacy, the coalition also collaborates with other agencies involved in elder abuse issues. Earlier this year, I established the Elder Abuse Task Force to promote these efforts on a more localized level.

Task force topics include:

- 1) Caregiver/ Guardian Abuse,
- 2) Commercial Scams and Frauds, and
- 3) Physical Abuse and Neglect.

The task force is comprised of members representing community health agencies and members of the community. We plan to work hard in all three of these areas to protect residents from abuse, fraud, and neglect. I will be telling you more about our efforts as our work progresses.

Meanwhile, if you suspect that an older adult is the victim of elder abuse or neglect, you can contact the Michigan Family Independence Agency's Adult Protective Services Division. A report can be made by calling the family violence help line toll-free at 1-800-996-6228. If you or someone you know has been the victim of a scam or fraud, please contact the Consumer Protection Division of the Michigan Attorney General's Office at 373-1140.

Mark Your Calendar: Senior Activities Fair

On Friday, September 24, 2004, I will be holding my 4th Annual Senior Activities Fair. The fair will be held from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. at the South Precinct Police Department at the corner of South Cedar and Holmes. Special guests will include Dr. Kimberlydawn Wisdom, Michigan Surgeon General,

and Sharon Gire, Director of the Michigan Office on Aging. The event is co-sponsored by the Greater Lansing Area Club of the National Association of the Negro Business and Professional Women's Club.



The fair will include free health screenings, information booths on senior-related topics, and a free continental breakfast and buffet lunch. Handicap-accessible

transportation from various sites will be provided by Dean Transportation. Call 373-1734 for more information.

Please accept my personal invitation to come out and enjoy this special day of events created around your interests and your needs. I look forward to seeing you there!

MI CHOICE - Offering Tax Credits for In-Home Care

After a lifetime of work and service to their communities, senior citizens deserve to spend their "golden years" in their own homes or those of their children whenever possible. To help accomplish this goal, I have co-sponsored legislation to create an income tax credit for people who care for their parents at home. The legislation would offer a \$1,000 income tax credit for taxpayers who care for one

or more of their parents in their homes for at least 180 days of the year.

In addition, you may want to learn more about the MI Choice program, which allows eligible adults to receive Medicaid-covered services (like those provided by nursing homes) in their own homes or other residential settings. While enrollment for MI Choice had been closed since early 2002,

Governor Granholm has reopened enrollment into the program, and today some 6,800 seniors are enrolled in the program with another 100 being added each month.

There will be over 8,000 seniors enrolled in the program by the end of FY 2004. To learn more about MI Choice or to submit an application, contact the Tri-County Office on Aging at 887-1440.

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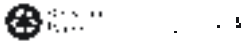
Tell Me What You Think...

The Elder Abuse Task Force is addressing three areas of concern to seniors: Caregiver/guardian abuse; commercial scams and frauds; and physical abuse and neglect. Do you have comments on these or other issues that should be considered by the Elder Abuse Task Force?

Thank you for your input! Please return to the address on the reverse side of this coupon. Your name and address are optional.



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Grandparents' Rights Update

The battle for grandparents' visitation rights continues in Michigan. Currently, Michigan grandparents have no legal rights to visit their grandchildren since the Supreme Court ruled the previous law unconstitutional. In order to meet the Supreme Court guidelines, the Senate has passed legislation that would meet constitutional parameters to legally restore those rights. The current bill would:

- Allow parents to determine what is in the best interests of the child.
- Require evidence that a lack of grandparent visitation would harm the child.
- Require grandparents to provide clear and convincing evidence that grandparenting

time is in the child's best interests.

- Require the court to defer to the fit parent's opinion in making its decision.

The legislation also adds a list of ten factors to consider when determining the best interests of the child, including the grandparents' mental and physical health and moral fitness, the emotional ties existing between grandparents and the child, and the child's reasonable choice if the child is old enough to express a preference.

Additionally, the legislation allows grandparents to seek a grandparenting

order when the child's parents are divorced or separated or such action is pending or if the child's parent (who is the child of the grandparent) is deceased.

The Senate and House have passed differing versions of this legislation, and the bill is currently before a joint House conference committee where it is hoped the differences can be resolved when the legislature returns this fall.



FREE Publications Available

As a service to you, I am pleased to offer the following publications from my office. Please check the appropriate box(es) below, fill in your name and address in the space provided, and return this entire coupon to: **State Senator Virg Bernero, P.O. Box 30036, Lansing, MI 48909-7536.**

- ☐ Citizen's Guide to State Government
- ☐ Services for Seniors
- ☐ Michigan Map
- ☐ Planning for Your Peace of Mind
- ☐ Changes and Choices, Legal Rights of Senior Adults

Name _____ Address _____

City _____, MI Zip Code _____ Phone () _____